



Utah Parent Center
Special needs, extraordinary potential

Disclosure on the Job

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Every job seeker with a disability is faced with the same decision: Should I or shouldn't I disclose information about my disability?" Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to disclose is entirely personal. It is a decision to be made only after a person with a disability weighs the personal advantages and disadvantages of disclosure. Disclosure is to tell someone something that was previously unknown, to open up, to reveal, to tell.

People with disabilities must consider the supports and services that they may need to be successful in the job of their choice. Remember that accommodations in the workplace are only provided when a worker discloses his or her disability and requests job accommodations. It is not enough to "look" like you have a disability. Employers and co-workers are not required to provide accommodations to workers who have chosen not to disclose their disabilities.

The process of learning how to disclose disability-related needs effectively and to develop an accommodation plan is extremely valuable. Effective disclosure skills require that a person 1) share information regarding his or her disability related needs, and 2) provide creative practical suggestions for job accommodations.

A disability is only important if it affects (or can possibly affect) a person's ability to perform the essential functions of a job. As the first step, help the young person consider how his or her disability affect5s or may affect his or her ability to perform the essential functions of the job. Second, help him or her identify what supports would provide the most favorable environment for success in the workplace and possible accommodations to request in workplace situations. The prospective employer wants to know that the person being interviewed is qualified and can perform the core responsibilities with accommodations and supports.

There is no "right" time and place to disclose that the individual has a disability. There are five opportunities an applicant or employee has a chance to disclose that they have a disability to his or her employer, these include:

1. On the job application
2. During the interview
3. After the job offer
4. After he or she has started working
5. If a problem exist in the workplace

The worst time to disclose, of course, is after you've been fired.

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Interview Tips

- Arrive 20 minutes early
- Conform to dress and presentation style of the person interviewing you
- Shake hands only if a hand is offered
- Bring an extra resume
- Start interview through introductions and small talk
- Describe work-related experiences
- Answer all questions
- Answer with confidence
- Do not give unnecessary information
- Do not discuss disability
- Do not take notes during an interview
- Close the interview

The tips have primarily been gleaned from a list of "Culturally Normative Interview Behaviors" presented at the 1996 AHEAD Conference by Ed R. Williams, University of Arkansas

Disclosure on Applications

Disclosure on application is not usually the best time to disclose that you have a disability. Williams noted that employers are afraid of making mistakes. Once you hire someone, it is difficult to 'get rid' of them. Once you make it to the interview stage, you have essentially demonstrated that you are qualified for the job. However, there are some professions or even as a requirement to have a disability for some positions. For example, I work in the disability community, it is considered a plus to be an individual with a disability in my field.

Disclosure during Interviews

A person with a disability may or may not choose to disclose his or her disability during an interview. If the disability is visible, he or she may want to discuss how it will not get in the way of doing a good job, especially if give the proper accommodations. A person with a visible disability could give examples of how he or she would perform the job. If the disability is invisible they can choose whether or not to disclose his or her disability based on his or her own comfort levels. It is not required that an individual disclose his or her disability at this stage. A study showed that individuals who did not disclose – even those with obvious disabilities were more likely to be hired.

After he or she has been offered a job

Many individuals choose to disclose their disabilities after they have been offered a job. They want to be selected for the position because of their skills, and worry that disclosure prior to the point may influence the interviewer's decision. However, once hired, they choose to disclose to obtain any accommodations needed to do the essential functions of the job.

During the Course of Employment

Sometimes, individuals with disabilities do not recognize that their disabilities can negatively affect their job performance. This is especially true for youth getting their first full-time job. They may feel confident when they first begin a job, but become concerned later that they may have underestimated their need for an accommodation.

Remind the young person that it is his or her responsibility to ask for an accommodation if he or she needs one. It is always better to ask for it before his or her job performance is question.

Never

If an individual is able to perform the essential functions of the job without reasonable accommodations, they need not disclose their disability.

What To Disclose

Remember that preparation and practice are essential when planning to disclose a disability to an employer. Is the information presented in a clear and concise way that is relevant to the job? If it is, terrific! If not, work with the young person to make some changes and practice rehearsing the disclosure conversation. Don't forget to reinforce that it is unnecessary to disclose very detailed information.

Below is some information that a young person with a disability might wish to present:

- General information about his or her disability
- Why he or she has chosen to disclose his or her disability, including its impact on his or her job performance.
- The types of job accommodations he or she anticipates needing in the workplace; and
- How his or her disability and other life experiences can positively affect his or her work performance.

Article taken from "The 411 On Disability Disclosure", NCWD National Collaboration on Workforce and Disability <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure> and ODEP Office of Disability Employment Policy